

MINUTES – MARCH 19, 2012

The Caswell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at the Historic Courthouse in Yanceyville, North Carolina at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, March 19, 2012. Members present: Nathaniel Hall, Chairman, Cathy W. Lucas, Vice-Chair, William E. Carter, Jeremiah Jefferies, Gordon G. Satterfield, Kenneth D. Travis and N. Kent Williamson. Also present: Kevin B. Howard, County Manager, Brian Ferrell, County Attorney, and Angela Evans representing The Caswell Messenger. Paula P. Seamster, Clerk to the Board, recorded the minutes.

MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER

Chairman Hall opened the meeting with a Moment of Silent Prayer.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Hall asked the Board of Commissioners and the citizens present to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Hall stated “Before we approve the Agenda I would like to request that we amend the agenda. We have two items that came to my attention after the agenda went out. First, we have Mr. Kenneth Graves present tonight and because he would like to speak on an issue that has been before this Board before I will ask to amend the agenda after Public Comments so that Mr. Graves can speak. The next item is a letter of support for an organization that has put together an initiative in the Casville community. We have a letter of endorsement on what they are trying to do and our clerk, Ms. Seamster, drafted something for us. Those two things I would like to add to the agenda.”

Commissioner Travis moved, seconded by Commissioner Jefferies to amend the agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Jefferies moved, seconded Commissioner Travis to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

The following items were included on the Consent Agenda:

- A) Approval of Minutes of March 5, 2012 Regular Meeting

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Hall opened the floor for public comments.

Mr. Thomas Hoskins came before the Board and made the following statement:

“My name is Thomas Hoskins and I live at 198 Arch Cook Road, Pelham, NC. I hate to take up you all’s time but I really appreciate what you all are doing for this Country. I salute you. I am just concerned about the zoning that you all are proposing to start again. Taking taxpayers money and hiring people to start it. I don’t like it. I have been putting up signs all over the county and letting people know because nobody knows what is happening. In the January meeting you all proposed to start it again. It is political suicide if you don’t know it. People do not want it and if you don’t believe it you get them to call you. Put your telephone numbers in The Caswell Messenger and say call me if you want zoning. See how many phone calls you get. This is my opinion and not anybody else’s. Nobody put me up to this. I did this on my own. I will flood this county with signs if I need to. I will fill this courthouse up with people if I need to. Ya’ll take it in good judgment. We do not need zoning. We have enough land use ordinances in position that are being enforced. Ya’ll have a good day.”

Mr. Tommy Freeman came before the Board and made the following statement:

“Good evening my name is Tommy Freeman and I would like to thank this commission for having a “Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day”. I have never had a civic organization invite me nowhere like this in 45 years. From the bottom of my heart I appreciate it. Another thing, I live on Rat Castle Road. I think it is one of the last roads in Caswell County that needs to be paved. I have pulmonary problems and so do some of my other neighbors and I would love for this commission to look into who can get this road paved. Another thing, it is going to be kind of warm on March 31st but we are going to cook a stew for the Caswell County Humane Society in Yanceyville beside Hardees. That is all I have. Thank you.”

With no other public comments Chairman Hall declared Public Comments to be closed.

KENNETH GRAVES

Mr. Kenneth Graves came before the Board and made the following statement:

“Good afternoon Board of Commissioners. My name is Kenneth Graves and I am here in reference to some property that I have over on County Home Road. For those who are new on the Board and who are not familiar with this I have maps and deeds if you don’t mind me passing these out. Back in May or June of 1978 I spoke with Ms. Eurie Johnson, who is deceased now, and she agreed to sell me four acres of land out on County Home Road. At that time it was nothing but a big open field. I went to the bank to get a loan to purchase this land. Northwestern Bank here in Yanceyville, the bank told me before I could purchase the land I had to have a 60 ft. right of way in there to it. I gave her either \$500 or \$1,000 down. She went and had it surveyed off and a right of way cut in there. She cut the rest of it up in lots so I bought 4.22 acres at that time. Now that 60 ft. right of way has been blocked by a house that has been built there. I have been before the commissioners before about this problem. A young man who lives in this house has built a carport right in the right of way which is blocking me. I have invested a lot of money in Caswell County, a couple hundred thousand and I hope to develop this but if I can’t get into it the property will be worthless. I am hoping that you all will take care of

this matter and give me my right of way back. I have talked with the building inspector several times. I can't get him to come out with me and take a look at where the house is in reference to the road. He told me one time that you all had passed for the house to be torn down that was in the right of way. He had part of it torn down. There is still six or eight feet or more of the house still stuck out in the right of way plus a big concrete slab that is leading into the carport. If I wanted to grade the road up or put something in there I would not be able to do that. I did check with the state of North Carolina and they said that it is illegal for anybody to block a right of way. I am hoping that you all will follow the state law and not let that happen. Thank you."

Chairman Hall asked "Are there any questions for Mr. Graves? Mr. Graves came before us again and I requested that we amend our agenda because this was an item that we have heard before. Mr. Graves because this involves staff we will go through our appropriate channels from the County Manager down. We will ask the County Manager to review and investigate what is going on and we will get back with you."

RESOLUTION FOR CDBG SCATTERED SITE OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING GRANT

Chairman Hall stated "This was on the agenda at the last meeting and I understand that some of the commissioners requested to see the actual application before the resolution was approved. I am aware that the application was submitted to us for review. Ms. Whitaker is here if you have any questions. We will entertain them now and then we will move towards handling the resolution."

Commissioner Lucas stated "Chairman Hall there is no questions but I do have clarification on the date for the deadline for the application for Ms. Whitaker and the County Manager. It was in our agenda, a copy of the original letter from the state for the 16th or the 19th. On the Department of Commerce's website it does state on there on the very first line on that site the application deadline for 2011 grant cycle is March 30, 2012 so that was a correct statement of March 30th and I wanted to make that part of the record. Chairman Hall, I have a question about the date, should we not change the date, the adopted date to today's date?" Chairman Hall responded "Yes."

Commissioner Travis moved, seconded by Commissioner Williamson to adopt the Resolution for the CDBG Scattered Site Owner-Occupied Housing Grant with the current date. The motion carried unanimously.

RESOLUTION OF THE CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Division of Community Investment is a significant source of funding for affordable housing within Caswell County; and

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Division of Community Investment has conditionally awarded Caswell County \$400,000 for Scattered Site Owner-Occupied Housing funds for Caswell County residents; and

WHEREAS, the funds are expected to assist low income families with housing rehabilitation or relocation assistance; and

WHEREAS, Caswell County will realize additional social benefits in the form of preserving its affordable housing stock for low and moderate income citizens.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS;

That the Board of Commissioners of Caswell County will substantially comply with all Federal, State and local laws, rules, regulations and ordinances pertaining to the project and to Federal and State grants pertaining thereto.

That, Nathaniel Hall, Chairman, Board of Commissioners, Kevin Howard, County Manager, and successors so titled is hereby authorized and directed to furnish such information as the appropriate governmental agencies may request in connection with such applications for the project; to make the assurances and certifications as contained above, and to execute such other documents as may be required in connection with the construction of the project.

That this Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

That the County will submit an application to the North Carolina Division of Community Investment in the amount of \$400,000 as funding for the Caswell County Scattered Site Housing Program.

Adopted this the 19th day of March, 2011

S/Nathaniel Hall
Chairman, Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

S/Paula P. Seamster
Clerk to the Board

CHANGE ORDER FOR PELHAM WATER TANK

Mr. Howard stated "What we are requesting here is actually the second phase that the engineers are working on to put a solenoid control valve system in. We will move that part of the project into the water tank construction. This will allow the tank to fill automatically. Once that tank goes on line in May or June if there is a fire out there they will be able to hook up to it and drain that tank and it will automatically fill back up. They will put a control value in there that will allow us to do that. We are just moving something from the second phase of the project into this phase and saving, by our estimate two or three thousand dollars in the process. It is a slightly different system. It is not as complicated and it will work just as well."

Commissioner Travis asked “This is not new money, it is the same money you already have in it right?” Mr. Howard responded “Yes sir this is in the grant monies we received.”

Commissioner Lucas asked “When will the tank be filled?” Mr. Howard responded “They have to install this valve. There is a six week lead time to get the valve. We are thinking late May or early June, that is when we will fill it, clean it and test it so it will be sometime early summer when it will come on line.” Commissioner Lucas continued “How much money will that leave in that fund?” Mr. Howard responded “We still have between four hundred to five hundred thousand dollars in the fund to do the second phase which is a sewer pump station and upgrades to the water booster station. I will actually have a breakdown for you at the next meeting.”

Commissioner Carter moved, seconded by Commissioner Jefferies to approve the change order for the Pelham Water Tank project. The motion carried unanimously.

CHANGE ORDER FOR NEW DETENTION CENTER PARKING

Mr. Howard stated “This is to add the parking we discussed early in the project, a parking lot in the courtyard area beside the new detention center, right behind the courthouse. What this does is it meets the requirements from the Town of Yanceyville to meet the minimum required parking spaces for the project. These funds will come from the contingency of the project, \$74,099. It will add approximately 50 spaces in there which puts us over what we will need on site to meet the parking requirements for the zoning.”

Commissioner Satterfield asked “Mr. Manager is this in addition to the parking lot we were going to build originally?” Mr. Howard responded “No, this is the one we had talked about adding that was not on the original site plan. We are adding parking down below the Health Department and that is already in the project cost. This is adding 50 spaces to meet that requirement we got through the zoning process. We discussed adding this early in the project but this is the change order to go ahead and to do the work to the parking lot.” Commissioner Satterfield continued “I know in the original plan we were losing some parking spaces so we were building some additional parking spaces.” Mr. Howard responded “Right, those are the ones as you come in the entrance off of County Park Road we are adding about twenty to thirty parking spaces right there. Even adding those back did not meet the requirements of the zoning. This parking lot was being added to accommodate the square footage of the new building.”

Commissioner Lucas asked “And that is a zoning requirement from the Town?” Mr. Howard responded “Yes ma’am. You have to have one lot for so many square feet of the building.” Commissioner Lucas continued “This was in the original plans for the detention center?” Mr. Howard responded “No ma’am this was not.” Commissioner Lucas stated “It was talked about later.” Mr. Howard responded “As we got into that process we realized we did not have enough spaces.” Commissioner Lucas asked “And the balance starting out in contingency was what?” Mr. Howard responded “\$319,000.” Commissioner Lucas continued “And now what is it?” Mr. Howard responded “Taking this out you will be at about \$225,000. We spent some on the unsuitable soils.”

Commissioner Satterfield asked "How many spaces were up there in the municipal parking lot we turned down with the Town?" Mr. Howard responded "I think there were 85 parking spaces in that parking lot." Commissioner Satterfield continued "Would those parking spaces, if we made an arrangement with Yanceyville, satisfy the zoning?" Mr. Howard responded "I can ask that question. In discussions early on that would have been taken into consideration if we had of had a contract leasing that. That contract went away and that is when we discovered we did not have enough spaces on site." Mr. Ferrell added "A strict reading of their zoning ordinance raised a question about whether or not off-site parking would count towards the total number that is required in the zoning ordinance. So whether or not there were some formal or informal discussions the zoning ordinance has some limitations about counting off-site parking. I don't know if that answers your question but it is addressed in the zoning ordinance and they have a distance requirement but generally all the parking has to be provided on site." Commissioner Satterfield responded "They can also issue a variance to that." Mr. Ferrell stated "They certainly can." Commissioner Satterfield continued "I just hate to pay, Mr. Chairman, \$75,000 if we don't have to. We could pay the Town \$2,500 a year on a long term contract. We can't maintain that parking lot down there for \$2,500 a year after we build it. I would like for the county manager to look into this a little bit further between now and the next meeting before we make up our minds on this."

Mr. Howard stated "I would just like to add one thing. This quote, the materials cost, is time-sensitive with the fluctuation in oil prices so in a couple of weeks this could be a little bit more than what it is now."

Commissioner Jefferies stated "I would like for the county manager to check into the parking lot with the Town."

Commissioner Lucas asked "Chairman Hall could we get a copy of that parking requirement or a copy of the Town zoning?" Mr. Howard responded "Yes ma'am I have a copy in my office."

Commissioner Travis moved, seconded by Commissioner Jefferies to table the change order for the new detention center parking until the next meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Jefferies stated "I went to the meeting with PBH next to Charlotte and it was a very good meeting. They did bring up some good points on the LME. The LME is broke and PBH is going to have to bail them out. The next meeting will be on April 15th. It will be an orientation so we will learn more about that then.

Mr. Howard stated "I wanted to remind the Board about the meeting with the Farm Bureau Board tomorrow night at 6:30 p.m. at their office. Also the county has brought in a grinder at the landfill. It will grind up all the limbs, leaves and yard debris we have there. We should have pretty good mulch down there so we will be advertising a couple to three days during the next month or so we will be giving that away to the citizens if that is okay with the Board." Chairman Hall added "I am thinking this is a two part proposal. One, which is for a specified length of time and give it away to the citizens and after that we can sell it to contractors. Initially my

thoughts were to have the manager to announce this and then proceed at the next meeting but people need to start working in their yards. I would like to go ahead and handle it this evening. As a policy issue we need to vote on it.”

Commissioner Jefferies asked “Will it be put in the paper to let the citizens know?” Mr. Howard responded “We will advertise it.”

Commissioner Jefferies moved, seconded by Commissioner Carter to approve giving the mulch to the citizens. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Hall stated “Mr. Manager we will make sure that notice goes out to all the citizens of the county and we need to develop some type of orderly system so people can get in and get out without problems.”

Mr. Howard continued “And the last item I have is we discussed the county having a County Day in April. The date that we found that works is April 21st. We will have it from 10:00 until 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 21st at the Senior Center. All departments will be set up with information booths and other agencies in the county will be set up as well. Citizens will be able to come through and gather information about each department on the services that we provide.” Chairman Hall added “This is part of a national initiative so that citizens will know what services are provided by county government. I was surprised myself, as long as I have been involved with the Board, I went by the Register of Deeds office and I did not know all the services that they provided there. We will have all the departments set up and the citizens will be able to quiz them and find out all the services that are available to them. Please mark your calendars and plan to come out.”

LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR YOUTH INITIATIVE

Chairman Hall stated “The last action I have that was added to the agenda was a letter of support for an organization in the Casville community for their youth initiative project. Ms. Seamster has drafted a letter of endorsement that she will share with us.”

Ms. Seamster read the letter of support “The Caswell County Board of Commissioners is writing in support of the proposal the Caswell County Partnership for Children is submitting to your organization on behalf of the Casville Youth Initiative. The Caswell County Board of Commissioners understands the proposal is for a Level Two Residency that will bring a dramatist and a videographer to work with the young people of Casville.”

Commissioner Lucas asked “What is this exactly? Is this a facility, a Level Two facility?” Chairman Hall responded “No, that kind of threw me as well. It is a person who is an artist that comes in to work with the youth. This person will come in for a specified amount of time to work with the youth.” Commissioner Lucas continued “I live in the Casville community so I am curious what the youth initiative would be?” Chairman Hall responded “The director is now working through the Caswell County Partnership for Children to get this initiative off the ground. This started as a part of the healing process for the artist that lived out there near the store.” Commissioner Lucas stated “Sayed Rawi.” Chairman Hall continued “That is part of

what this is all about. Normally I would request that any organization send this to us in a timely manner so we could get this out to everyone and that you would have an opportunity to read it but when I got the request they wanted to get the application out tomorrow so that is why this request was given at the last minute. We are not supporting them financially in any way. That is not their request.” Commissioner Lucas asked “Will the county be required to do any administration on the grant should they receive it?” Chairman Hall responded “No. The Partnership will handle the administration if the grant is awarded.”

Commissioner Williamson moved, seconded by Commissioner Jefferies to approve the letter of support for the youth initiative. The motion carried unanimously.

PROCLAMATION FOR “WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY”

Chairman Hall stated “I did not at the beginning of the meeting take the time to officially welcome you on behalf of the veterans and the veterans that you represent here tonight. We are pleased that you are here. We are pleased to take the actions that we plan to take tonight as part of the Welcome Home ceremony. As a little background, the U.S. became involved in Vietnam as early as 1955. In 1964 Congress gave President Lyndon Johnson the authority to escalate the war in Southeast Asia covering Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. This authority that Congress gave to the president and future presidents afterwards probably accounts for the fact that no war ever took place. Under this one piece of authority called the Gulf of Tonkin resolution the president had the authority to move forward. Congress should have been the one to declare war but in this case they did not. Over the course of the period from 1964 through 1975 we had hundreds of thousands of troops in Southeast Asia. We lost over 58,000 and three or four hundred thousand wounded. Because the war was never declared that probably contributed to the fact that when our soldiers came home we never said thank you. We never said good job. We never said welcome home. We are trying to correct that. The state of North Carolina is trying to correct that. Tonight before we move forward we have a proclamation that we want to present to the families of those that lost their lives. Once the proclamation is read I will ask this Board for action on the proclamation. After the action is taken we will take a brief recess so we can readjust our seating arrangement and we will proceed.”

Commissioner Lucas read the Proclamation for “Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day”

PROCLAMATION

In Recognition Of

WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

MARCH 30, 2012

WHEREAS, throughout our history, courageous men and women have donned the uniform of our Armed Forces and built a noble tradition of faithful and dedicated service to our County, State and Nation; and more than 58,000 made the ultimate sacrifice while thousands more were wounded in Vietnam in order to preserve our freedoms and it is also important to remember the 1,600+ service members missing in action; and

WHEREAS, the families and friends of thousands of American soldiers must continue to endure uncertainty concerning the fate of their loved ones who remain unaccounted for from the Vietnam conflict; and

WHEREAS, since their return from service, Vietnam Veterans have greatly contributed to our County, State and Nation by offering skills, education, leadership, maturity, and dedication learned in military service; and we continue to draw inspiration from the heroism and dedication of those who currently serve and sacrifice for the cause of liberty and justice; and

WHEREAS, we can never fully repay our debt of gratitude to those heroic men and women who served, were wounded, or even died in battle, and this presents the opportunity for the people of Caswell County, North Carolina, and America to honor and thank our Vietnam Veterans for their service to our State, Country and especially Caswell County; and

WHEREAS, Over 1600 North Carolinians lost their lives in Vietnam and six from Caswell County lost their lives, **THANK YOU**;

Ralph Mitchell of Blanch– US Army KIA October 23, 1964

Billy Lee Snipes of Pelham— US Army KIA October 1, 1967

John Thomas Webster of Burlington—US Army KIA January 10, 1968

James Michael Richards of Pelham—US Marines KIA August 22, 1968

Kenneth Earl Wade of Yanceyville—US Army KIA February 23, 1969

John Willie Blackwell of Yanceyville– US Army KIA April 6, 1969

NOW, THEREFORE, We, The Caswell County Board of Commissioners, do hereby extend greetings and best wishes to all observing March 30, 2012 as;

“WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY”

This the 19th day of March, 2012.

ATTEST:

S/Paula P. Seamster
Paula P. Seamster
Clerk to the Board

S/Nathaniel Hall
Nathaniel Hall, Chairman
Caswell County Board of Commissioners

Commissioner Jefferies moved, seconded by Commissioner Travis to accept the proclamation for “Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day”. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Hall stated “On behalf of the Caswell County Board of Commissioners and the citizens of Caswell County I salute the families of our veterans and our veterans. We welcome you home.”

RECESS

The Board held a brief recess.

“WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY”

Chairman Hall stated “At this time I will present Mr. Fred Smith.”

Commander Fred Smith stated “Good evening. I am Fred Smith, Vietnam Veteran of the U.S. Marines. I served in Vietnam from '67 to '68. I am the Commander of Veterans for Foreign Wars Post 7316 of Yanceyville. If you are a Vietnam Veteran please stand now. Thank you all for serving and welcome home. This is a great day, some would argue much too late. Many Vietnam Veterans have ill feelings about how we did not have an official welcome home from our country but to look back at the politics of the era we were pushed to the side, the leaders then not wanting to fuel dissatisfaction. I am not sure how many branches of the service rotated the troops but we as Marines did not go as a group or company in Vietnam. We were sent in as individual replacements when I went to Vietnam. Since the Iraq and Afghan wars the replacements have been companies or detachments are mostly going in as a group so when they return home they return as a group and they were welcomed as a group back into the United States. There were welcome celebrations in Air Force Reserve Centers, etc. I am very proud and glad these servicemen got recognized for their bravery and service to our nation. Hopefully when they all return there will be a national day to recognize their efforts and sacrifice. April 18, 1968 I left Vietnam after a thirteen month tour and it was not my senior trip. When I arrived in California there were no crowds to welcome us home. There was a lot of dissatisfaction of the war and some returning veterans were spit on, cursed, and abused, called baby killers, and much worse at times for serving in Vietnam. That was 43 years and 11 months ago. When I arrived in Raleigh on April 21, 1968 it was great to see my parents and family in Raleigh. They surprised me. They were supposed to meet me in Danville and they were at the Raleigh airport. When I stepped off the plane in Raleigh I was just another serviceman, another passenger on the plane. Up until last year on March 30th no Vietnam Veteran was officially welcomed home. It was not celebrated even though our U.S. Senator Richard Burr introduced the bill in Congress. I was welcomed home last year by a few veterans that knew about this date. For all the Vietnam Veterans here in Caswell I would like to thank our County Commissioners especially Chairman Hall and Clerk to the Board, Paula Seamster, for all of their support in making this happen. When I approached Chairman Hall he was very receptive and when Paula got the news from Mr. Hall, Paula within a few days had the first draft of the proclamation. I think all of us need to stand and thank the Board of Commissioners and Paula for this. As the proclamation reads over 58,000 died in Vietnam and over three or four hundred thousand were wounded. The first American to die was in 1956. The first combat death was in 1961. The last combat death was on May 15, 1975. Many veterans to this day still live with their personal horrors of war. Their wounds, whether physical or mental, has handicapped them every day and has controlled their lives and their families. Nearly seventeen hundred are still missing and not accounted for. In Vietnam over 1.6 million servicemen and women served in combat. Most of you do not know this but 61% of all who served in Vietnam were volunteers and 97% said that they were proud they served their country in Vietnam. For the six families here tonight who lost a family member the void in their lives has never gone away. The memories still remain. Today should be

regarded as a special day for Vietnam Veterans of Caswell County and to all that served in Vietnam. To my knowledge this is the only county to think of that is doing this. Several states are honoring Vietnam Veterans like the celebration in Charlotte on March 31st. Before I started this research I did not know any of these servicemen. I never met them but now I know quite a lot about them. What is to happen tonight started about 3 months ago when I made contact with U.S. Senator Richard Burr's office asking who from Caswell County lost their lives in Vietnam. Their reply was we do not know. We know how many were killed in Vietnam from the state of North Carolina but not for the individual counties. The reply was we don't know contact the Register of Deeds office. I did contact the Register of Deeds office but the Register of Deeds office did not have the certificate of deaths here for the Vietnam Veterans who lost their lives. I was told by Tammy Riggs, the Register of Deeds, to go to the library. The librarian, Rhonda Griffin, was very helpful telling me just to give her a few days. In a few days she emailed me that she had found five Caswell County Veterans that lost their lives. When talking with our veterans in our Veterans of Foreign War post there was another veteran that grew up and went to school here in Caswell and he made the sixth. The next part was getting confirmation and more information on these six so I spent many hours at The Caswell Messenger looking through papers starting in 1964 through 1969. I also googled their names on the computer and searched phone books. Some information was easy to find on the families and I knocked on a few doors that I should not have by error. Eventually all the families were contacted and all of the families were invited to be here tonight. In Washington there is a black granite wall at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial where as of 2011 there were 58,272 names inscribed in the wall. Five names were inscribed in 2011 of veterans who died as a result of wounds received in the war. The six from Caswell County are inscribed in the wall beginning with the earliest casualty in 1964 and our last casualty in 1969. In all, North Carolina lost 1609 veterans. I have visited the wall many times but the last time I visited there were rubs of the names taken from the wall for all six. The rubs will be shared with the families on Memorial Day, May 28th. On Memorial Day, Monday, May 28th at 11:00 a.m. here in this courthouse, this room, these six will be the focal point of the ceremony. I hope that all the families can attend and the community will be invited. The speaker for Memorial Day this year will be Larry Stogner, a Vietnam Veteran who served in 1967-68 – U.S. Air Force. He grew up about three blocks down the street. He will be the speaker here on Memorial Day. Tonight the Commissioners have for each family a framed proclamation to present. I have visited with all six families and have been invited to attend tonight. When I visited with the families I tried to be as sensitive as possible for I knew this would bring back emotions from over forty years but it was an honor to talk with the families and to hear the stories of their loved ones. The real meaning for night is to honor these six and their families. In talking with their loved ones I opened up memories that are still alive today in the hearts of the families. This is something that should have taken place years ago. Our goal here tonight is to give recognition to a group of men that gave the ultimate sacrifice to defend our nation. We honor each of them tonight.”

Commander Fred Smith continued “The first tonight to recognize is Staff Sergeant Ralph Mitchell. Ralph Mitchell was born on July 30, 1930. Son of Mr. & Mrs. Jasper Mitchell of Blanch. He joined the U.S. Army in 1952 and served for 12 years. He obtained the rank of E6 Staff Sergeant. His wife, Ocie, passed away in 1998 but he has a son and a daughter. They are not here tonight but I have heard from both of them through email. Darlene was 2 years old in 1964, the year of her dad's death. She lives in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Her brother, Ralph

Jr. lives in Quincy, Massachusetts. I would like to read some of the emails from him if I may. 'Hard as this is I would like to thank you and your VFW chapter for bringing this to reality. If my work schedule would allow I would be making plans to be there. Although I may not be a combat veteran I did serve in uniform for 30 years which includes full time service in the Army as well as part time service in the Army National Guard and Army Reserves. I totally went against my mother's wishes by going into the military but I always felt it was my way of following my dad's footsteps in connecting with his spirits.' It is signed Ralph Mitchell, Lt. Colonel U.S. Army Reserves-Retired. So he had a little rank on his sleeve. I also talked with his sister, Queen Totten who is 91 years old. She lives here in Yanceyville with some of her family members. We used the picture we took off the wall of Ralph and his family before he went overseas. We took that one little picture out and blew it up. I took it back to show it to her and what she said was when I showed her the picture is that is my baby brother. Ralph was killed in action October 23, 1964. His name is inscribed in the wall Panel 1 East Line 68, the first panel of the war. If you go to the wall website you will see his picture that we put on the website." Commander Smith asked if anyone was representing Ralph Mitchell. Ms. Pam Thaxton came forward. Chairman Hall thanked Ms. Thaxton for her uncle's service.

Commander Smith stated "The next is Billy Lee Snipes. Billy Lee Snipes was born October 12, 1947 to Mr. & Mrs. Gussie Snipes of Pelham. Billy and his brother Bobby were both in the U.S. Army at the same time. Billy volunteered to go to Vietnam rather than to let his brother go. Brothers were not supposed to be in Vietnam at the same time. That was not true because my brother was in the country at the same time I was a part of it. Billy went to Vietnam May 29, 1967 and served in the 1099th Transportation Company and he was a casualty on October 1, 1967. He is buried at Lively Stone Church in Pelham. Billy wrote letters home to his mother. They are all in the binder with all of his military information. I visited with his sister, Brenda Gwynn for about two hours going through the binder and talking with her. His father, Gussie, lives with Brenda but is in poor health. Billy had aspirations of being a minister. He did not like what he did for his duty in Vietnam but he served proudly. He sent his mother poems which he wanted to be published in the paper and then have the paper sent back to him. That never happened. The poem is in a newspaper article of his death for all to read in the Reidsville newspaper. On the Vietnam wall Billy's name is inscribed in Panel 27 East Line 37." No one was present from Billy's family.

Commander Smith stated "John Thomas Webster or J.T. was born August 28, 1948 to Mr. & Mrs. Fred Webster of Route 4, Burlington on the backside of Caswell County. He attended Bartlett Yancey High School and just prior to going into the U.S. Army his family moved to Alamance County. He joined the U.S. Army in June of 1967. He went to Vietnam on November 21, 1967. PFC J.T. Webster was a casualty on January 10, 1968. He served in Vietnam 50 days before becoming a casualty. I visited with his mother, Edna, and sister, Jane in Burlington. He also has another sister, Louise. His mother will be 96 on Wednesday. She told me the day he left for Vietnam he picked up his duffel bag and told his mother he did not want to go but he had to defend his country. She also told me another comment he had made to friends and people at church. I knew this prior but I was waiting for her to tell me. The comment was that he would not come home. We have some veterans here tonight that he made this comment to. On the Vietnam wall his name is inscribed on Panel 34 East Line 26. If the Webster family would

please step forward. We have his mother, Edna, sisters Jane, Louise and Gail.” Chairman Hall thanked the family for JT’s service.

Commander Smith continued “James Michael Richards of Pelham was born June 4, 1948. He joined the U.S. Marines and went to Vietnam January 1, 1968. He obtained the rank of Lance Corporal E3. He was a casualty of the war on August 22, 1968. He was a grunt which is an infantryman in the Marines. His casualty was a result of small arms fire. On the Vietnam wall in Washington his name is inscribed in the black granite on Panel 47 West Line 31. Also on the web page there are several entries for him. One reads in 1968 I was fine. I saw the choppers landing in tall fields of waving grass. I saw the Marines jumping out. I had my own war with a wooden gun. I began to understand death if only in a remote way. Your life had meaning and great value. I know the Lord has your soul in Heaven. This is from a person that shared the same name from Pennsylvania. This was written in 2006. I met with his mother, Kathleen who is 91. I talked with his sister, Juanita of Reidsville who was too young to remember him and to his other sister, Ruby Spence of Pelham. His sister, Juanita, named her son after James and he now serves in the U.S. Army. If the James Richards’ family will come up.” Chairman Hall thanked the family for James’ service.

Commander Smith stated “Kenneth Earl Wade was born March 8, 1948. He was the son of Mr. & Mrs. Wilson Wade of Yanceyville. He was a graduate of Caswell County High School. Prior to joining the U.S. Army he served in the Job Corp. He went to Vietnam on September 18, 1968. He served with the 25th Military Police Company. Specialist Wade was a driver of a jeep carrying a 50 caliber machine gun. Under intense attack he was running cover for some armored personnel carriers that had been hit. Allowing those soldiers to safely withdraw but ultimately his jeep was hit by a rocket propelled grenade. His actions were responsible for saving many lives that day, February 23, 1969. At the Vietnam wall his name is inscribed on Panel 31 West Line 28. I also visited with his brother James who lives in Blanch and his niece Pam Thaxton. Kenneth Wade grew up right off of Dillard School Drive. Is there anyone from Kenneth Earl Wade’s family here?” Ms. Pam Thaxton and Kenneth’s sister came forward. Chairman Hall thanked the family for Kenneth’s service.

Commander Smith continued “John Willie Blackwell was born December 31, 1947. He was the son of Mr. & Mrs. Algie Blackwell of Yanceyville. He was a graduate of Caswell County High School. John joined the U.S. Army on January 1, 1968. He obtained the rank of E5. He served with Charlie Company Troop Command and was a casualty of the war April 6, 1969 while stationed in Quang Binh. He is buried at Red Hill Church Cemetery on the Park Springs Road. At the Vietnam wall his name is inscribed in the wall on Panel 27 West Line 27. He is survived by a brother, Charles and a sister, Elizabeth Blackwell. We have both of them here tonight. Would you please come forward? And his Mother is here tonight. Commander Smith asked “And how old may we be?” Ms. Blackwell responded “91.” Chairman Hall thanked the family for John’s service.

Commander Smith stated “That concludes our ceremony.”

Chairman Hall stated “There is one other thing. Again to the families, Thank You. To our Vietnam Veterans, ‘Welcome Home’. There is one final thing the commissioners would like to

do. When Mr. Smith mentioned this project to me I learned a lot. I had to go back and refresh my memory on some of the things that occurred in the Vietnam War. One of the things I learned is in addition to being a veteran Mr. Smith also suffered wounds not once but twice serving our country. We had a shout out from Ms. Blackwell for Mr. Smith but we need to have a shout out from Caswell County for Mr. Smith and his service.”

Chairman Hall and Vice-Chair Lucas presented Commander Fred Smith with a Certificate of Commendation for all he did to make this night a success.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:45 p.m. Commissioner Travis moved, seconded by Commissioner Jefferies to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

Paula P. Seamster
Clerk to the Board

Nathaniel Hall
Chairman
